



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Marketing Communications Strategy

June 2017
Revised October 2017
Prepared by:
Seamus McAdams
i2 Total Marketing

Introduction

The Marketing and Communications strategy builds upon Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's current communications strategy and sets out a framework for how the Council's communication activities will be managed over the next three years.

It aims to give direction to the Council's media, marketing, and public relations communications activity and to ensure that communication between the Council and its stakeholders is planned, coordinated and always appropriate to its intended audiences.

The Council will aim to keep its communications clear and simple and will use the most appropriate channels of communication to reach its intended customers and stakeholders including residents, employees, businesses, community partners and all levels of government.

The strategy provides a framework into which detailed actions from each Council service area will be added as part of a Marketing Action Plan. The key is to deliver a workable document that can be easily referred to and assist in the implementation of measurable actions and outputs.

1. Context

1.1 Marketing Communications

Effective communications are essential to the success of any modern organisation. In a changing environment - the recent re-organisation of local councils in NI, challenging financial times, the growth of digital technologies, services are transforming and it is essential that bodies such as Fermanagh and Omagh District Council understand and communicate effectively with their target audiences.

Effective marketing and communications is therefore essential in developing and delivering clear messages to:

- Communicate the information our customers need to access our services
- Communicate about the impact we have on our customers' lives
- Influence the behaviour and attitudes of our customers by developing and delivering clear messages.

It is also vital that information pertaining to our services and activities are available to and accessible by key target groups.

The Council's core communication tasks can be broken down into a number of functions, as overleaf:

Communication Tasks

Function	Aim	Principles
Corporate Identity, Corporate Publications & Advertising	To ensure that services and information is consistently represented in a recognisable corporate style.	Information in all formats will always be clearly branded.
Public Relations	To promote better understanding of our organisation and its work.	Inform and educate target audiences. Target key issues for our organisation and our target audiences.
Press Relations	To use the media (print and electronic) as a means of open, honest and proactive communication with the public.	Build strong and open relationships with the media.
e-communication	To use modern and up- to-date channels to get the message across. To promote communication and access to information	Develop website to make it a key channel for communication. Use social media tools and e-mail to communicate with staff and customers.
Internal Communications	To sustain two way flow of information and to encourage confidence, trust and loyalty.	Inform staff of issues that affect them and our organisation.

1.2.1 Council

The implementation of Local Government Reform on 1 April 2015 saw the formation of Fermanagh & Omagh District Council and the transfer into Council of additional functions from central government. The Council has also been given the additional statutory functions of Community Planning and Performance Improvement. The key functions and services of the Council include:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Control • Environmental Health • Planning • Community Planning • Tourism • Economic Development • Urban & Rural Regeneration • Environment, Sustainability & Biodiversity • Leisure, Recreation & Sport | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Support and Good Relations • Registration • Waste Management and recycling • Arts, Culture and Heritage • Business Support • Licensing • Parks and Open Spaces • Off-street Parking |
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Fermanagh & Omagh District Council area is geographically the largest of the eleven new councils in Northern Ireland. The Council currently services a population of 114,356 people, has a staffing complement of over 800, 40 councillors and provides its services in across the district, with Council and Committee meetings alternating between the Townhall, Enniskillen and The Grange, Omagh. With this in mind, the need for effective communications has never been so vital to the Council, and it is in this context that this strategy has been prepared.

1.2.2 Linkage to other Council strategies, plans and policies

In March 2017, the Council launched the district's first Community Plan with the vision of:

“A welcoming, shared and inclusive Fermanagh and Omagh district where people and places are healthy, safe, connected and prosperous and where our outstanding natural, built and cultural heritage is cherished and sustainably managed”

The Council Corporate Plan Update 2017 -2019 provides the reference guide for the delivery of high quality services and delivering on its core Mission to:

“Lead and serve our community, working with others to promote quality of life, quality places and quality services for all.”

In particular, points 9.17 - 9.19 of the Corporate Plan set out the rationale for a Marketing Communications Strategy (with reference to implementation of the Customer Services, Communications, Community Engagement and Involvement Strategies; the need to develop and maintain an effective Media Management Strategy; the need to conduct a Residents' survey).

These principles will be at the forefront of the marketing communications strategy, which will ensure that, through effective, planned and co-ordinated communications activities, the Council's targeted audiences will be kept fully informed and “buy-in” to a reinvigorated, strong, corporate Fermanagh and Omagh District Council brand.

This marketing communications strategy replaces the previous communications strategy and will be integrated with the newly prepared digital marketing strategy.

1.2.3 Key Messages

When delivering the strategy, a number of key messages will be communicated to reinforce the Council's mission. These include:

- "Leading and Serving our Community" - Council taking a lead and demonstrating Civic Leadership
- "Working with others" - reinforcing the Council's Partnership approach
- "Quality of life, quality place and quality services for all" - promoting an ethos of quality and exemplifying good practice in all the Council does.

These messages will be further refined and Councillors and Council officers will be encouraged to communicate these principles when the opportunity arises.

2. SWOT Analysis

In setting out the strategy, the following SWOT analysis outlines the Council's current communications strengths and weaknesses, and identifies any potential threats and opportunities for the Council moving forward.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council recognises the need for effective communications • Council vision in place supported by strategy documents • Council has a number of well used communication tools and channels • Experienced Communications Staff with strong PR skills • Good local knowledge • Large volume of information circulated through multiple Council outlets, using print, digital and Social Media Presence via Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff resources: Comms team small for task required • Planning - communication sometimes seen as an "after-thought" • Branding guidelines not clear • Mix of marketing skills in Council resulting in inconsistency in quality of documents produced. • Service areas working on their own without monitoring can result in different quality of output, with crossed messages possible. • Lack of customer review mechanisms • Lack of internal communication review mechanisms
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further development of the Marketing Communications function • Use of a Communications calendar for proactive communication • Put Marketing Comms implementation plans in place for each service area • Better planning and coordination of marketing communications could lead to cost savings • Enhance brand/Council credibility • Strong new brand identity means that Council can lead the way on good design and branding • Lots of material and information available • Create a central bank of images for all communication and social media • Greater customer satisfaction via better communication • Improved staff morale and loyalty • Improved co-ordination of messages • Social media can be better developed to reach different target audiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide geographical area – difficult to cover all areas in great detail • Buy in to new organisation culture • Lack of focus/too much to do. • Insufficient resources to implement communications plan • Use of incorrect media to target appropriate audiences e.g. businesses, younger people

3. Strategy

3.1 Strategic Overview - What does good communications look like?

The key to improving the Council's communications function is to understand the importance of placing strategic communications at the heart of the organisation, as a means of supporting the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives and priorities as contained within the Corporate Plan Update.

Good communications helps to:

- Communicate the hopes and ambitions of the district
- Improve corporate and place reputation
- Help engagement – of residents, stakeholders and staff
- Support good political and managerial leadership
- Build trust
- Drive change
- Attract investment of the district
- Deliver savings and provide Value for Money
- Manage performance

3.2 The Marketing Communications Strategy

Overall Aim:

To ensure all residents, communities, stakeholders, visitors, employees, and everyone who deals with the Council have a clear understanding of the Council's vision, its services and its achievements.

This will be achieved through the planned use of consistent, high quality, relevant and cost effective communications.



3.2.2 Principles

Through implementation of the Communications Strategy, the Council will strive to:

- Secure and strengthen the reputation of the Council as a strong civic leader;
- Make the Council easy to understand and to talk to;
- Ensure all communications are consistent and co-ordinated across all channels to give maximum support to the Council's Corporate Strategy;
- Ensure that residents, partners and employees understand and support the Council Vision and their contribution to it;
- Ensure that residents, visitors and other stakeholders are kept informed about the Council, its plans and initiatives, and the district;
- Promote the image of the Council as an effective, efficient organisation, focused on the needs of the residents of the district;
- Build and maintain a professional corporate identity;
- Ensure that Council communications activities reflect the full diversity of the community and ensure equality of access to services by employing alternative means of communication where appropriate;
- Co-ordinate and direct communications so that all service areas work towards shared objectives;
- Promote high quality customer service and ensure that everyone in the Council understands their role in delivering this;
- Promote Fermanagh and Omagh as a leading place for doing business and a great place to live, work, visit and invest in.

3.2.3 Strategic Outcomes

These aims and principles will be met by implementing the following strategic outcomes and objectives

Strategic Outcomes	Objectives
<p>Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is highly regarded and visually recognisable as a Civic Leader</p>	<p>To support the Council in achieving its vision and priorities - through targeted campaigns and activities based around key priorities</p> <p>To communicate clear and consistent messages</p> <p>To adopt a cohesive, consistent approach to branding</p>
<p>Residents, communities, stakeholders and visitors to the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area are fully informed and empowered to participate in the decisions that affect them locally.</p>	<p>To establish a quality, value for money marketing and communications function at FODC</p> <p>To achieve consistency, impact, efficiency and effectiveness through the setting of communications objectives and plans for all 17 Council service areas</p>
<p>Fermanagh and Omagh district is recognised as a place where people, communities and businesses prosper</p>	<p>To increase the profile of the district with key media in NI and beyond by highlighting success stories, successful projects and initiatives and actively promoting Fermanagh and Omagh</p>
<p>Fermanagh and Omagh District Council has effective internal communications systems in place and our staff are well informed</p>	<p>To engage with councillors and staff to ensure consistency of understanding around priorities and key internal programmes</p> <p>To support the Council to deliver on priorities through implementation of key internal projects, campaigns and activities</p>

3.3 Audiences

The Council will aim to communicate effectively with everyone who has an interest in the Council and the District, including:

- Residents of the District;
- Elected Representatives of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area;
- MLAs / MPs
- Staff of the Council;
- Visitors to the Fermanagh and Omagh District;
- Key partners – other statutory organisations and agencies;
- Local organisations - Voluntary and Community groups– including S75 groups;
- Local Business Community;
- Suppliers and Customers;
- Media - on and off line, local, national and international;
- Other local authorities and Government Departments.
- Trade Unions

3.4 Delivery of Outcomes

The following section sets out what activities will be put in place to achieve the strategic outcomes, and sets out how these will be measured and evaluated.

3.4.1 Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is highly regarded and visually recognisable as a Civic Leader

Throughout the Council's many service areas, a wide range of marketing activities and campaigns take place. To maximise impact and ensure value for money, the Council will take a more strategic marketing approach and focus on a **campaign based promotional approach**. This corporate marketing approach will be planned, focussed and measurable, and will be co-ordinated by the Marketing Communications team.

By taking a **clear campaign led approach**, the aim is to improve public perception and understanding of Council services and in turn better manage the Council brand and reputation. A campaign-led approach will improve efficiency and value for money and the effectiveness of the Council's messaging, marketing and advertising activities.

A variety of traditional and digital marketing tools will be used, including the resident newsletter, press releases, media interviews, fliers and posters, events, social media, website, internal communication channels and paid for advertising. Whilst traditionally local press and radio and print media has been used, other media will be looked at – such as Facebook and Google advertising, but will be dependent on target audiences and budgets.

Branding – Whilst the Council brand is distinctive, there is scope to improve its use to ensure the brand is reinforced across all media. In this regard, the current guidelines need to be finalised, stripped down to a manageable document, and managed by the Marketing Communications team.

Use of Design – Design will play an increased role in supporting the marketing and brand management of the Council. Each service area will consult with the Marketing Communications team in advance of any campaign to ensure that a consistent message is communicated, both visually and audibly, and this will be consistently applied across all media.

What are Our Outcomes?	What will success look like? (Performance Measures)	What we need to do (Actions)
<p>Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is highly regarded and visually recognisable as a Civic Leader</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Marketing Communications structure put in place with appropriate resources • Council Marketing Group set up. • Successful delivery of a 12 month corporate marketing action plan. • Each service area has its own Marketing Communications action plan in place and has implemented it. • Streamlined guidelines for use of corporate brand and logo are in place and being used by all services. • Use of the guidelines is monitored by the Marketing Communications team • All new Council contracts contain branding requirements and guidelines. • Effective evaluation shows objectives set for each campaign are met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate a survey (as part of the Residents' Survey – point 9.19 of the Corporate Plan Update 2017-19) as a baseline to gain a better understanding of what residents currently think of the Council's communications efforts and gauge which tools are most likely to result in effective communications. • Review and streamline existing guidelines on the use of the corporate brand and logo • Ensure high quality, consistent communications are designed and delivered, via appropriate media, to relevant target audiences. • Issue Council branded Identity cards to all staff • Set up a Council Marketing Group which meets on a monthly basis to review progress, share expertise and drive the Council's marketing communications function. • Carry out review of PR team, examining resources and need to appoint an enhanced team complement to include a Marketing Manager/Officer, to which all other service areas report • Designate a person to a marketing and communications role within each service area • Each service area to develop its own marketing communications action plan which flows from the corporate plan and feeds into the Marketing Communications Strategy • Work with the procurement team to ensure that all future contracts for the delivery of Council services include a requirement for the effective use of the FODC brand.

3.4.2 Residents, communities, stakeholders and visitors to the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area are fully informed and empowered to participate in the decisions that affect them locally.

The Council has a wide and diverse range of external audiences (as outlined in section 3.3), with varying and sometimes conflicting interests. Each audience group has their own requirements and expectations of the Council. The restructure of the communications team, with better planning and co-ordination of activities, will deliver a more targeted and effective way of communicating with individuals and communities.

The Council currently uses a wide range of tools to communicate to and receive feedback from its target audiences. These include: the Residents' Newsletter – Inform; Council website, local/regional newspapers and radio; email; text messaging; Facebook and Twitter; seminars and workshops; Council meetings; engagement events; roadshows and displays etc.

All these channels will continue to be used to deliver communications; however, ongoing work will be carried out to examine how Council service areas interact with these different audiences as a means of improving the targeting of communications to different groups.

Local media – The PR team currently provides a proactive and reactive media relations service, responding to a large amount of press enquiries a year, issuing proactive press releases and features and arranging interviews, press conferences and photo calls.

This will be maintained and efforts will be made to further improve positive media coverage and develop the Council's media relations service to promote and/or defend the Council. While the Council has focused more on reactive, and last minute, rather than proactive media relations, the introduction of a more planned Marketing Communications approach will aim to enable the PR Team to focus on producing more positive and proactive communications and marketing.

Website - digital communications channels, particularly the website, will play an increasingly important role in how the Council communicates and engages with its target audiences – this element of the plan is contained within the **Digital Marketing Strategy**, which will be incorporated as part of this Plan.

Social media - social media will continue to grow and will form a key part in communicating with local residents and will provide positive opportunities for the Council to engage directly with the public and gain quick customer feedback.

Whilst the Council may increasingly use electronic communication and social media channels, there will still be need to accommodate those residents who continue to want printed information, either through ongoing printing of key documents or through increased use of "print on demand" via information made available on the Council website.

What are Our Outcomes?	What will success look like? (Performance Measures)	What we need to do (Actions)
<p>Residents, communities, stakeholders and visitors to the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area are fully informed and empowered to participate in the decisions that affect them locally.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the percentage of local residents feeling better informed about the work of the Council, as measured by the residents' survey (baselines required); • Increase in the amount of positive and proactive communications produced by the Council (baselines required); • More effective communications system in place, with clear plans, regular monitoring meetings and better skilled staff; • Customer contact 'drop in' centres open in Omagh and Enniskillen with % increase in footfall – to be added • Increase in the number of people accessing digital communications; • Increase in the number of services successfully using social media to deliver information and communicate with local residents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to use a mix of communication channels to communicate and engage with audiences, inc. the Residents' Newsletter – Inform • Through the Council Marketing Group, work with our 17 service areas to review communications channels to enable more effective targeting of different groups. • Use the Council Marketing Group to plan marketing and PR activities well in advance of events and activities. • Provide marketing/promotional/social media training to Council Marketing Group • Provide media training to key staff and Councillors • Ensure each service area incorporates a PR element to its marketing communications action plan • Customer Contact 'drop in' centres – develop corporate branding and prepare an awareness campaign • Local media - maintain and further improve positive media coverage and develop media relations service to promote and defend the Council. • Digital Communications Tools – make more use of digital communications channels e.g. website, email, text etc. to communicate and engage with our target audiences. • Social media - use electronic communication and social media channels as these channels continue to grow.

3.4.3 Fermanagh and Omagh district is recognised as a place where people, communities and businesses prosper

Apart from communicating within the Council and within Fermanagh and Omagh, the Council also needs to communicate with audiences outside the district e.g. government departments and agencies, the NI Assembly, EU bodies, external funders, national and specialist media.

National media and specialist/trade press – An increased focus is required to profile the district with key media in NI and beyond and to strengthen relationships with journalists from the national and specialist/trade press.

The Council Strategy recognises its key role in promoting Fermanagh and Omagh as a place “**where people, communities and businesses prosper**”. Planned and proactive communications are essential to the success of the Strategy and there is an ongoing need to highlight the successful projects and initiatives which are taking place in the District to improve the area and to promote Fermanagh and Omagh.

What are Our Outcomes?	What will success look like? (Performance Measures)	What we need to do (Actions)
<p>Fermanagh and Omagh district is recognised as a place where people, communities and businesses prosper</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased profile of Fermanagh and Omagh in national or specialist media. • Communications plan in place to support the delivery of the Council Strategy and other Plans. • Improved awareness of high profile visitors, activities and events in the District. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update listing of key journalists to enable the Council to develop positive working relationships with the press and to target good news stories more effectively. • Actively encourage service areas to report good news stories and feed them to key press contacts via the Marketing Communications team & Council Marketing Group. • Host official visitor events - MPs/MLAs, celebrities, visiting groups etc. • Prepare standard presentation of the District and the Council’s role. • Highlight key tourism and economic development initiatives and stories that profile the District

3.4.4 Fermanagh and Omagh District Council has effective internal communications systems in place and our staff are well informed

Internal communications play a key role in ensuring that all employees and councillors know the Council's plans and values, how their role in the organisation contributes to the overall achievement of priorities, and how their behaviour affects the way the organisation is perceived internally and externally. Internal communications are also essential for ensuring employees are kept up to date and informed about changes, development and Council decisions that may impact on them as an employee.

The Council's internal communications include:

- the staff Intranet as a hub,
- the Staff Newsletter, which is issued quarterly
- Employee briefing sessions
- Monthly service area meetings, team meetings
- A focus on improving customer service through the Customer Service Working group
- Memos, other newsletters
- Noticeboards

This will be maintained and, as outlined in the previous Communications Strategy, work will continue with the Council's Human Resources Section to develop and introduce new ways to receive staff feedback, to understand levels of staff engagement and encourage a culture of unity in the organisation.

In keeping with a renewed strategic communications approach, a baseline survey on internal communications should be conducted to gauge satisfaction levels with communications in the Council with a view to using the most effective and efficient channels.

What are Our Outcomes?	What will success look like? (Performance Measures)	What we need to do (Actions)
<p>Fermanagh and Omagh District Council has effective internal communications systems in place and our staff are well informed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Percentage of employees who are satisfied with communications within the Council – baseline review needed. • Number of employees accessing email updates and newsletters • Employees at all levels receiving regular, relevant and timely information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out baseline survey via Survey Monkey on internal communications • Review and further develop the staff Intranet • Place communications with employees at the heart of the Council • Develop and promote Council Organisational Chart and Staff directory • Ensure key information is relayed to employees at the same time, or preferably, before it is made public. • Providing regular briefings and updates to employees via messages from the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service updates. • Continue production of “Q”, the staff newsletter, and ensure it is delivered to all employees to encourage staff feedback.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out annual reviews of all existing communications channels to ensure that they meet the needs of Officers and Councillors
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4. Marketing Communications Delivery

The Marketing Communications Team will be responsible for co-ordinating communication from the Council, liaising with the various media channels, developing communication materials, managing content on the Council’s website and other social media platforms and providing support and assistance to all Council service areas in their communications activities.

The team’s core role will involve:

4.1. Media relations, to include:

- Proactive: identification of stories and news which support the key objectives of the Council
- Reactive: response to media enquiries, requests for interviews and comments
- Challenge media as appropriate – for example, correcting facts, handling complaints to the media and managing the amount of exposure relating to specific issues
- Emergency situation response, such as major accidents, flooding
- Preparation and distribution of all media releases including liaison with relevant councillors and officers
- Monitoring of all media on and off line, including social media

4.2. Corporate Communications

- Corporate brand and identity
- Corporate publications
- Corporate stakeholder engagement
- Design and publishing of corporate publications, printed and web-based
- Corporate campaigns
 - public facing
 - key internal campaigns
 - sharing of campaign and performance information
- **Internal communications**
 - Staff newsletter
 - Intranet
 - Templates for group communications
 - Staff awards and events

4.3 Corporate Events

Organisation, co-ordination and promotion of corporate events - civic receptions, corporate launches, staff recognition awards etc.

4.4. Campaign planning and management of products, services or issues

Services to include: co-ordination of design, visual identity, photography, video production, copy writing, printing, merchandise, exhibitions and roadshows, social media campaigns.

5. How will we measure our success - Review & Evaluation Mechanisms

The carrying out of a Residents' Survey and an employee survey will provide sound baseline performance information for the strategy. Moving forward, this will allow the Council to set benchmarking standards against which performance can be measured and will allow for the setting of realistic targets and goals for improving communications across the Council in the future.

In addition, a baseline survey on internal communications will gauge satisfaction levels with communications in the Council and will allow for a means to assess which internal communications channels work best.

The strategy will be monitored using a variety of additional methods:

- Each campaign within each Council Service Area will have a clear Marketing Action Plan with an Implementation Schedule that includes monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Campaign objectives will be set and a clear schedule of activities agreed well in advance of any event or activity.
- Progress will be reported to the Marketing Communications Team on a monthly basis and contribute to the overall monitoring and evaluation of the Council's marketing and communications work.
- Monthly meeting of Marketing Communications Group – this will meet on a monthly basis to review progress, share expertise and drive the Council's marketing communications function.
- An evaluation of all campaigns and activities will be carried out to assess how objectives have been met.
- Media Reports – as is the current practice, monthly analysis of enquiries, responses, results and coverage achieved.
- Key channels will be monitored and the impact of campaign and news activity evaluated, with external support. This includes advertising, print media, web, intranet, social media, Inform newsletter, staff newsletter etc.

Evaluation

- Residents' survey approximately every three years
- Survey of staff satisfaction with communications every year initially
- Online employee intranet polls on specific elements of the strategy
- Evaluation of all campaigns

APPENDIX ONE

Marketing Communications Review

The following review outlines some observations on the current communications situation in FODC. Whilst not a detailed review, it forms the basis for further reflection and sets out a series of actions and recommendations for incorporation into the Marketing Communications Strategy.

The Corporate Communications Function

An effective Council corporate communications function can be broken down into three key areas:

- Press and PR
- Internal Communications
- Marketing Communications and Promotion

1. Press and PR

The Council's corporate communications is at present, carried out by the Council's PR & Customer Service Team, which co-ordinates communication from the Council, liaises with the various media channels and manages content on the Council's website and other social media platforms. The Team is also responsible for developing communication materials and providing support and assistance to all Council service areas in their communications activities.

At present, the team comprises the Council's PR & Customer Services Manager, with support from the Democratic Services team. The PR team appears to have a good level of control over the Council's PR, where it works with other service areas in the preparation and co-ordination of press releases. However, PR and marketing appears to be looked at as an add-on to mainstream activities, so the PR team tends to work on a lot of 'last minute' press releases, in addition to handling media queries. This means that the team tends to be more reactive and lacks the time to be more strategic and plan the Council's communication activities.

The Team's primary expertise is in public and media relations activities, with limited expertise in marketing and visual communications.

The Council has responsibility for 17 separate service areas, some of which are more consumer facing than others; all these service areas require differing types of communication and media appropriate to their target audiences and will involve a more co-ordinated mix of PR, design, copywriting and digital media expertise.

Given the volume of sheer information flowing through the Council and the current lack of resources available at present to better manage and co-ordinate these activities, a review of the team, its size and its role will be carried out as part of this strategy.

2. Internal Communications

As outlined in the Council's previous Communications Strategy, internal communications play a key role in ensuring that all employees and councillors know the Council's plans and values, how their role in the organisation contributes to the overall achievement of priorities, and how their behaviour affects the way the organisation is perceived internally and externally.

The Council's internal communications include:

- the staff Intranet as a hub, which is being reviewed as part of the new digital marketing strategy
- the Staff Newsletter, which is issued quarterly
- Employee briefing sessions
- Monthly service area meetings
- A focus on improving customer service through the Customer Service Working group

In keeping with a renewed strategic communications approach, a baseline survey on internal communications should be conducted to gauge satisfaction levels with communications within the Council with a view to gauging how best staff and Councillors wish to be kept informed and using the most effective and efficient channels to do so.

3. Marketing, Promotion and Branding

The Council currently uses a wide range of tools to communicate to and receive feedback from its target audiences. These include: the Residents' Newsletter – Inform; Council website, local/regional newspapers and radio; email; text messaging; Facebook and Twitter; seminars and workshops; Council meetings; engagement events; roadshows and displays etc.

Whilst a lot of marketing communications activities does take place, the Council at present does not have a distinct marketing function. The PR team works with other service areas from time to time in the planning of events and activities but it appears that, generally, service area staff have responsibility for managing their own marketing activities.

They also appear to have high levels of autonomy for the origination, design and printing of their communications materials, which means that there is limited monitoring of the Council's brand and marketing communications. This is evident in the short review carried out of 25+ Council printed promotional items communications, which showed that a majority of these appear to have been 'designed' in-house. Whilst all of the items did use the Council logo, there is very little cognisance taken of the Council's brand guidelines in terms of layout, colour, fonts etc.

Information provided by FODC finance department indicates that the Council budget for advertising and promotion is £266,580 for 2017/18. This budget is divided across 5 directorates and service areas for a range of activity with much of it committed to the discharge of the Council's statutory duties e.g. planning advertisements, tender adverts, job adverts etc. A percentage of this budget is allocated to additional marketing/promotion, which varies depending on the role and nature of the service area. As this equates to a sizeable budget, additional controls, via the Communication team, will be put in place to ensure that the Council "brand" is presented in a consistent, co-ordinated and professional manner across all Council promotional activities.

In addition, it would appear from our observations that, not only is money being spent on internal printing, but potentially significant staff time is been used drafting up inconsistent material of varying design quality, which may be detrimental to the overall presentation of the Council and its brand.

At present, it appears that there is varying levels of marketing and communication expertise within individual service areas. There is a distinct possibility that, in the absence of this expertise, that messages are being delivered inconsistently, and may not be targeted at the correct audiences,

using the most appropriate media. In addition, as there is a lack of strategic communications, there is a high likelihood that many positive stories about the Council may remain largely untold.

Going forward, there is a clear need to create a strong corporate marketing communications function which is valued and respected by all Council staff. It must have appropriate experience and expertise to professionally monitor use of the FODC brand, and manage and deliver excellent, impactful content across a range of channels.

We recommend that each service area should have a person designated to a marketing and communications role. These persons should receive additional training in basic marketing, marketing planning, communications/PR and social media techniques. They would then be responsible for developing an outline marketing action plan for their service area, broken down into individual messages and campaigns, on an annual basis and then report to the Marketing Communications team. These individuals will feed into a Council Marketing Group which would meet on a monthly basis to review progress, share expertise and drive the Council's marketing communications function.

The appointment of a Marketing Manager/Officer, to which all other service areas report, would ensure consistency and co-ordination of the Council marketing communications activities. It is important that if any new appointment is made, that the person appointed should be an experienced, knowledgeable marketing practitioner whose professional advice is sought, respected and listened to.

4. Website & Social Media

The PR & Customer Service team is also responsible for some of the Council's corporate social media accounts, namely Facebook and Twitter, as well as managing the Council website. Whilst this did not fall within our brief, they nevertheless are key components of the overall marketing communications strategy and will be covered under the digital marketing strategy.

However, as the Customer Contact Centres will be developed as 'drop in' centres in Omagh and Enniskillen, there will be a need for these services to be clearly accessible on the Council website.

5. Customer / Communications Reviews

It would appear that no previous reviews have been carried out to gauge levels of satisfaction amongst residents as to how the Council communicates with them and that a very heavy importance is still placed on the role of the local press (despite declining circulations). Whilst no research has been carried out by the Council in this area, it is possible that residents may prefer to access Council information from a much wider range of sources.

We recommend that a survey is conducted into residents' views of the Council's methods of communicating with them. This would enable the Council, at this exciting new stage of taking a more strategic communications approach, to gain a better understanding of what its residents currently think of its communications efforts, but also give a gauge as to which tools are most likely to result in effective communications – either using print, digital and/or social media.