

# Communications Strategy

2011-14

## **OUR MISSION**

To deliver excellent, customer focused  
and cost effective housing services  
to all our residents



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Please feel free to get in touch with us if:

- You feel this document is not as clear and easy to read as you would expect; or
- You believe that we aren't doing the things that this document says we will do; or
- You just want to talk to someone about this document

Whatever the reason, if you want to talk to us about this document you should contact:

**Governance and Communications Manager on Freephone 0800 195 5552**

Approved:	April 2011
Effective from:	April 2011
Due for review:	October 2011

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## Introduction

- 1.1 Within SHP a range of services are provided that support the delivery of direct services to the tenants and leaseholders of Sutton Council.
- 1.2 The Communications team are responsible for all aspects of communication with residents, staff, partners, stakeholders and the wider community. This strategy identifies the medium term approach to the delivery of these services.
- 1.3 There are complementary support strategies for HR, Finance and ICT. Together with the strategies for the direct services and the strategic drivers, our strategies provide the focus for achieving our Priorities.
- 1.4 There has been comprehensive consultation with residents on our approach to external communications. In particular, they have been consulted over the development of the website and residents' reading panels, through which residents can influence all our major written communications.

## Where Are We Now?

- 2.1 Following a restructure to ensure a fit for purpose communications and marketing function for SHP, the current state of the service is reflected in the following:

### External Communication

- Profile information is available for most customers that identifies their preferred method(s) of communication

and this is used in communicating with them;

- An increasing variety of formats is available including large print, Braille, audiotape and a variety of alternative languages, languages are reviewed annually to ensure the most relevant are used;
- There is a communication toolkit available to staff on the SHP intranet that assists in ensuring consistent, quality communication;
- A large range of information is available in hard copy and via the website and this information is reviewed on a regular basis by a staff communications group and resident mystery shoppers;
- A customers' reading panel exists to ensure that written communications are appropriate to customers' needs both in content and presentation;
- A Resident HomeFront Editorial panel exists to ensure that there is resident involvement in producing HomeFront;
- The website has been reviewed with customer involvement in design and content and is kept up to date;
- A Resident Website Panel exists to provide feedback and suggestions on the current information and future website developments;
- A Facebook identity has been established with the intention of promoting community events and improving communication with younger tenants;

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- There are notice boards in a number of neighbourhoods that are used to display relevant customer information and promote marketing communications campaigns on a monthly basis;
  - The SHP brand has been developed since the start of the ALMO and now has good recognition amongst customers and the recognition is improving amongst the general public with brand being displayed in libraries around the borough and at Civic Centre and soon to be in local shops;
  - Printing costs are continually reviewed for value for money. Currently, all printing is undertaken in-house where this is the lowest cost option;
  - HomeFront in-house printing would cost more than sending to external printers and therefore will remain with external printers. However it is now printed on recycled non glossy paper;
  - The local print media and national specialist media is used to promote SHP and increase general recognition of the SHP brand;
  - Partners and the council's communications team are used to assist in raising the profile and reputation of SHP;
  - The Board Champion in place for communications works with the staff Creative Media Group to bring the boards perspective to communications and marketing ;

## **Internal Communication**

- There is a widely used staff intranet which is regularly updated and reviewed. There are Intranet editors in each service area who are trained and supported by the communications team;
- Quarterly Chief Executive briefings take place for all staff;
- Monthly Chief Executive Discussion Groups take place to enable staff to raise issues;
- A regular staff newsletter is distributed to all staff and is available on the intranet;
- A fortnightly staff e-briefing was introduced in November 2010. This briefing is intended to disseminate EMT and Service Area News;
- Information screens are regularly updated with brief, eye catching information for staff;
- The communications team regularly attends all service area team meetings to communicate inwards and outwards;
- The communications team creates a monthly information sheet for managers to cascade key findings from Board Meeting, EMT meetings, SIG, RIG, VFM, CMG and other cross-team groups;
- An annual staff satisfaction survey has been introduced for the communications service and the survey in February 2011 showed 96.7% overall satisfaction.

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## Where Do We Want To Be?

**3.1** We want to see a service where customers receive consistent, current and high quality communications using their preferred methods because there is:

- Significant and meaningful customer involvement in communications in methods, design and editorially;
- Effective use of the Board Champion for communications to drive the strategic development of communications;
- The use of modern technology to expand the channels of communication to meet the expressed preferences of our customers;
- A modern, fit for purpose website that allows customers to access services directly (e.g. repairs reporting, rent account information and payments);
- Effective use of neighbourhoods to communicate with customers, for example, through notice boards that contain relevant, up to date information;
- Strong recognition of the SHP brand among customers and the wider community and that the brand is associated with the provision of excellent, customer focused and cost effective housing services;
- Positive representation of SHP in the local and national print media.

**3.2** We also want to see high quality internal communications that provide the best

support possible to customer service delivery because there is:

- An effective internal communications framework built around a comprehensive, engaging and up to date intranet;
- A consistent, organisation wide approach to team briefings and meetings that ensures all staff are engaged with their own service areas and have sufficient awareness of other service areas;
- Effective cross-organisation groups that provide for a free flow of information and foster positive working relationships across service areas;
- Residents satisfaction with SHP communications to be determined by carrying out a survey;
- A continuation of the regular Chief Executive briefings for all staff coupled with discussion groups that enable staff issues to be raised and addressed;
- Good use of internal building space to communicate with staff (e.g. information screens on each floor);
- Effective communication with our partners that enhances service delivery to our customers.

## Our Strategic Objectives

**4.1** In order to achieve our desired service level we have prioritised a number of strategic objectives and identified the scope of each objective across the service. These strategic objectives are:

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- **To enable effective two-way communication with customers using their preferred methods [COM01]**

*Covering communications, involvement, events*

- **To facilitate clear and effective communication across the organisation [COM02]**

*Covering internal communication*

- **To support communication with our partners that assists in providing better customer outcomes [COM03]**

*Covering contractors, Council, partner agencies*

- **To continually enhance our reputation through effective media management [COM04]**

*Covering proactive PR, responsive PR*

**4.2** To measure our progress in meeting these objectives we will use quantitative and qualitative indicators including:

- Customers for whom we know their preferred communication methods;
- Customer views on how good we are at keeping them informed;
- Customer involvement in developing and delivering communication media;
- Website and intranet use statistics;
- Volume and type of media coverage.

## Our Drivers

**5.1** In delivering communication services we will seek to embed the organisation's strategic drivers:

- In supporting staff to provide the best possible services to their **customers** we will involve them in delivering effective written and electronic communications that match customers expressed preferences. We will use neighbourhood notice boards to provide relevant, up to date information and customers will gain a more positive representation of SHP in the local print media;
- To address the **diversity** of our customers we will ensure access to information through a variety of methods (e.g. large print, audio tape, translation services, website accessibility) that meet their expressed needs. We will also reflect the diverse nature of our customers through the way we provide coverage and represent them in our communications (e.g. visual representations of customers in publications and on the website). We will also adopt the same approach to internal communications to ensure that these meet the diverse needs of staff and reflect their diverse nature;

- We will address the **risk** that our communications don't meet customer needs by involving them in agreeing methods, design and editorial. We will also seek to address the risks to the reputation of the organisation by proactively promoting a positive image through our own publications, including the website and the local print media. The risk that our internal communications do not meet organisational needs will be addressed through the Communications Group;
- We will take account of **sustainability** issues by considering the media we use to reduce the use of resources and to maximise recycling opportunities;
- In pursuing opportunities for **value for money** in service delivery best practice and benchmarking will be used in reviewing costs. The environmental impact will be minimised by careful consideration of where modern electronic communication can replace traditional print and post. We will look to procure communications collateral through the use of the current procurement framework and to operate an on-demand rather than bulk print regime where this represents a cost effective solution.

## Issues To Consider

**6.1** The issues which may impact on the delivery of communications services that we are currently aware of are:

- Increasing access to information (and mobile) technology and through this the internet will continue to require us to make information and services available through these formats;
- There will continue to be a significant number of our customers who are only able to access information via more traditional methods and we need to ensure that information is available in these formats;
- The increasing diversity of the customer base (e.g. increasing numbers of people from Eastern Europe in the borough, an ageing population) means we need to keep under constant review the communication needs of our customers;
- The propensity of the local print media to focus on negative stories will require us to be more proactive in our reputation management.

## Expected Impact

**7.1** We expect, through the successful implementation of this strategy, to have the following impact:

- **Customers** will be better informed about us and our services and will be able to access information in a format appropriate to their needs. They will also have the opportunity to contribute to communication methods, design and editorial;

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- **SHP** will have better informed staff with greater awareness of opportunities to work jointly to meet the needs of customers and a better understanding of how each individual's role contributes to the organisation.

## Resources Required

**8.1** To successfully deliver this strategy we will require the appropriate level of resources, the implications of which are:

- Following a recent re-structure to form the Governance & Communications team, the level of staffing within the team is now sufficient for current requirements. However, there may be a need to bring in additional staff to





support the delivery of time constrained major projects (e.g. new internet and intranet sites);

- Revenue expenditure needs to be kept under constant review to ensure value for money is achieved and this will require a more planned approach in some areas.






## Strategy Delivery

**9.1** The actions required to implement this strategy in its first year are contained in the appended Communications Service Plan 2011-12.

























## Service Plan Key





























Reference	Service Improvement Plan reference	Summary of action	Responsible Officer	Start date	End date	Evidence of action having been completed
		Expected impact on customer focus (access, care or involvement)				Expected impact on risk
		Expected impact on equality & diversity				Expected impact on value for money





























## Improvement Actions

















CM.IA.11.01	SIP11.04	Develop an annual marketing campaigns plan that delivers co-ordinated key messages to stakeholders	AL	Apr-11	Jun-11	<i>Plan and evidence of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter implementation</i>
		Customer involvement at a strategic level is strengthened and customers are more aware of the issues affecting them				Reduces the risk that staffing structures will prevent improved performance
		Relationships will be built tat reflect the diversity of our customers				More appropriate structure will ensure improved value for money of existing communications budget
CM.IA.11.02	SIP11.04	Develop a key stakeholder relationship management plan that helps build productive relationships	AL	Jul-11	Sep-11	<i>Plan and evidence of 1<sup>st</sup> quarter implementation</i>
		Customer involvement at a strategic level is strengthened and customers are more aware of the issues affecting them				Reduces the risk that SHP does not engage with its key stakeholders and partners
		Relationships will be built tat reflect the diversity of our customers				Provides stakeholders with the opportunity to scrutinise value for money and enables SHP to work with partners to deliver better value for money

## Operational Actions

CM.OI.01	Review and update the communications toolkit	AL	Jun-11	Aug-11	Communications toolkit updated, templates for staff in use for consistent communications
	✓		✓	Ensures communications are targeted and consistent in branding contributing towards maintaining SHP's positive reputation	
				Removes the risk of inappropriate usage	
CM.OI.02	Utilise notice boards in Sutton Gate to ensure effective communications for staff	LB	Apr-11	May-11	Consistent branding on boards with up to date and relevant information.
			✓	Reduces the risk of increased staff dissatisfaction with organisational communications	
					
CM.OI.03	Develop and produce 4 themed editions of Homefront with increased involvement from residents	AL	Apr-11	Mar-12	Homefront produced and Homefront editorial panel actively involved
	✓			Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Ensures customers are provided with the latest information about SHPs activities	
					
CM.OI.04	Maximise effectiveness of communal notice boards on estates	AL	Aug-11	Sep-11	Guidance for content on external notice boards produced and mystery shopping to review effectiveness
	✓			Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Improves communication and information sharing to customers in cost effective way	
					
CM.OI.05	Developed relationships with LBS comms team	AL	May-11	Mar-12	Attend 4 LBS Comms team meetings per year
	✓			Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Improves our reputation and capacity for dealing with negative media enquiries	
					
CM.OI.06	Maximise joint media and PR opportunities with partners	AL	May-11	Mar-12	Attend 2 NFA Comms meetings per year
	✓			Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓): Improves our reputation and capacity for dealing with negative media enquiries	
					

CM.OI.07	Hold 3 themed stakeholder conferences	LB	Apr-11	Mar-12	Conferences held
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Provides the opportunity to enhance partnership working to improve the services delivered to customers			
CM.OI.08	Arrange quarterly tour of the borough	AI	Jun-11	Mar-12	Borough tours take place
	 ✓	Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Reduced the risk that staff are not familiar with the communities that they are delivering their services to			
CM.OI.09	Develop news bulletin for stakeholders	AL	Sep-11	Mar-12	News bulletins issued after each stakeholder briefing
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Improved joint working on targeted issues			
CM.OI.10	Carry out annual staff survey of the Communications Service	LB	Jan-12	Mar-12	Survey completed, results analysed and reported, actions incorporated into service plan
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Reduces the risk that the service is not being delivered in ways appropriate to customer needs			
CM.OI.11	Assign comms officers to provide tailored PR marketing and internal communications support	AL/LB	Apr-11	Mar-12	Officers assigned to Decent Homes, Neighbourhoods, Income, Repairs, Community engagement, Sheltered Housing
 ✓		Beyond maintaining current performance levels, there will be the following impact on the driver(s) indicated (✓):			
		Raised awareness and improved reputation of SHP and the work it does			
CM.OI.12	Create a team meeting agenda template using outcome based agenda	LB	Jun-11	Sep-11	Template created, produce proposal at Management Forum in July to be agreed and then distributed and in use
	 ✓	Reduces risk that information is not shared and managers are inconsistent			
					
CM.OI.13	Introduce a staff suggestion scheme (or support implementation)	LB	Jul-11	Sep-11	Going to staff forum in the summer to be agreed, launch at staff conference, Scheme up and running
 ✓		Increase staff opportunities to contribute actively			
					

CM.OI.14	Review and promote employee of the month	LB	Apr-11	Mar-12	EoM linked to staff conference, number of nominations increased
 ✓		Promote excellence and going the extra mile			
					
CM.OI.15	To conduct a review of staff views on Flagship after Issue 3	AI	May-11	Jun-11	Feedback documented and acted upon
 ✓		Ensure that FlagSHiP is effective in its aim to meet the communication needs of staff in terms of communicating messages about staff activities, events and sharing what teams are doing as well as keeping the “light hearted” approach.			
					
CM.OI.16	Audit customer communication channels	AL	Oct-11	Dec-11	Undertake audit, implement actions for improvement and promote results
		Ensure all customer communication processes' are effective and staff are aware of most beneficial methods for communications			
 ✓					
CM.OI.17	Develop process/mechanism to ensure staff aware of planned corporate customer communications	AL/LB	Nov-11	Dec-11	Reading panel used, all service areas sharing details of communications and merging as appropriate
 ✓		Ensure customer communications are integrated where possible to provide value for money and assist in promoting key corporate messages			
	 ✓				
CM.OI.18	Oversee NFA Award entries and support and promote other corporate award campaigns	AL/LB	Apr-11	Mar-12	Entry into awards and successes promoted
	 ✓	Improved corporate reputation regionally and nationally, staff/residents and our services recognised formally for excellence in service delivery			
					
CM.OI.19	Market the secure area of the website	LB	Jun-11	Oct-11	Increase in registered users
 ✓		Ensure our residents are aware of how they can register to log into their account online			
					
CM.OI.20	Develop social media communications channels	AL	Sep - 11	Oct - 11	SHP promoted and reputation built on Facebook, Twitter, etc
 ✓		Reduces the risk of failing to reach wider audience using popular, accessible and VFM communication channels			
					

CM.OI.21	Audit the Internet	LB	Oct-11	Jan-12	Communications Exchange Group & Resident Website Survey
	 ✓	Ensure the website is meeting the needs of residents and that information is kept relevant and up to date on our website.			
					
CM.OI.22	Design and Produce 6 editions of the staff newsletter FlagSHIP and design and produce the Corporate Briefing every 2 weeks for staff	LB	Apr-11	Mar-12	Newsletters produced and sent out to staff
	 ✓	To ensure effective internal communication and ensure that information is shared consistently amongst staff.			
					
CM.OI.23	Improve internal communications from the Board, from EMT and across teams realised as an issue from the staff survey	LB	May-11	Sep-11	Raise at Management Forum in May, get direction from Managers, implement changes
	 ✓	To ensure effective internal communication from the Board, from EMT and across teams.			
					
CM.OI.24	Implement and promote Team of the Quarter award	LB	Sep-11	Mar-12	Launch at Staff Conference, first award at end of quarter 3. Team awarded and put forward for nomination at Staff Conference 2012
	 ✓	To promote excellence within teams and going the extra mile.			
					







***Putting Customers First***  
***Making Services Accessible To All***  
***Achieving Value For Money***  
***Providing Quality Homes***  
***Creating Safe, Welcoming Neighbourhoods***

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