



**COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR**  
**COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2012 - 17**

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## INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Good communication should be essential for every organisation. Effective communication can help manage, motivate, influence, explain and inform.
- 1.2 Good, effective communication also helps strengthen democracy and allows for participation with and by the Comhairle's key stakeholders including the public and the Comhairle's employees.
- 1.3 *Stakeholders* (A person, group or organization that has an interest or concern in an organization. Stakeholders can affect or be affected by the organization's actions, objectives and policies.)

The Comhairle's stakeholders in terms of communication are:

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

- 1.4 This strategy is intended to benefit the Comhairle and its internal and external stakeholders. The benefits of implementing the strategy will be:
  - 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.
  - 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.
- 1.5 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.
- 1.6 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.
- 1.7 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 Comhairle's website in a bilingual format where appropriate as 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.
- 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/photos	Media Coverage	Media/Public/other stakeholders	As appropriate e.g. following Committee decision/new service/opening event	Departments/Comms Section/Members
b) Website – Internet Reviewed November 2012	Internet coverage	Public/other stakeholders	Ongoing	Comms section/ Departments/Members/ I.T.
c) Committee Reports	Media coverage/Internet coverage	Public/other stakeholders	As per Committee schedules	Departments
d) Public Engagement/Consultation	Public Attendance at meetings/feedback	Public/other stakeholders	As appropriate e.g. Budget Consultation Meetings	Departments/Members
e) Leaflets/Posters	Leaflet take-up/Service take-up/feedback	Public	Ongoing	Departments

<b>Channel and Action</b>	<b>Outcome/ Evidence</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Owner</b>
f) Twitter	Number of Followers	Public/other stakeholders who are Twitter users	Ongoing	Chief Executive's office
g) Facebook (Sports Centre and Community Education piloting)	Number of users/likes	Public/other stakeholders who are Facebook users	Ongoing	Departments
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	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	Gaelic speakers/learners	As required/ongoing	Comms section/ Members/ Officers
f) Make interviewees available for radio/TV	TV/radio appearances	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	Comms section/ Members/Departments
b) Media training	Trained spokespersons	Media/public/other stakeholders	Chairs 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	Comms. section
d) Front page of website to be used for rolling key Comhairle messages	Front page of website	Public/other stakeholders/employees (Intranet)	Ongoing but to be regularly reviewed as to which messages are replaced with new ones	Chief Executive's Office

### 3.4 Objective 4

**To develop Comhairle's website in a bilingual format where appropriate as a key channel of communication.**

<b>Channel and Action</b>	<b>Outcome/ Evidence</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Owner</b>
a) Press releases issued in bi-lingual format as far as possible and posted on website	Bi-lingual press releases	Media/public/other stakeholders	Awaiting outcome of budgetary process	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) Appointment of Gaelic Communications Officer	When/if appointment made	public	Awaiting outcome of budgetary process	Comms section/ Sgioba na Gàidhlig/

### 3.5 Objective 5

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

<b>Channel and Action</b>	<b>Outcome/ Evidence</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Owner</b>
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	Under review to simplify and modernize.	Chief Executive's Department/Panel/ Employees
d) Employee Survey	Employee responses	Employees	Corporate Improvements plan approved by Comhairle 2012. Updates 2 x year.	Chief Executive's Department
e) Committee Process	Comhairle decisions	Members	As per Committee schedule	Departments

<b>Channel and Action</b>	<b>Outcome/ Evidence</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Owner</b>
f) Information Bulletin	Information in Bulletin	Members	Bi-monthly	Departments
g) Leader's blog	Publication of Blog	Public/employees/other stakeholders	Ongoing – aim to update 2 to 3 times a week.	Leader/Comms. section
h) Intranet Reviewed November 2012	Use of Intranet	Employees	Ongoing	Chief Executive's Office

### 3.6 Objective 6

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

<b>Channel and Action</b>	<b>Outcome/ Evidence</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Owner</b>
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 Publicity	Public/employees/other stakeholders	Corporate Plan approved November 2012	Members/Departments/ Public
d) Consistent Advertising in line with Improvement Service Public Information Notice Guidelines (on website)	Reduced advertising costs	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.**

<b>Channel and Action</b>	<b>Outcome/ Evidence</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Owner</b>
a) Ensure monitoring and review of Communications Strategy	Ongoing Review and monitoring	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.**

<b>Channel and Action</b>	<b>Outcome/ Evidence</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Owner</b>
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	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

### 3.9 Objective 9:

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

<b>Channel and Action</b>	<b>Outcome/ Evidence</b>	<b>Audience</b>	<b>Timescale</b>	<b>Owner</b>
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	Media/public/other stakeholders/Members	Published on web in line with Committee Meetings (Thursday preceding meetings)	Chief Executive's Dept.
c) Agendas and minutes on website	No of hits to read minutes and agendas	Media/public/other stakeholders/Members	Ongoing	Chief Executive's Dept./ I.T.



### 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 review and 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 to disseminate information during emergency	Website access out of hours.	Public/members/other agencies	As required.	Faire
c) Use of WIEPCG Facebook site in conjunction with other agencies	Number of users	Facebook users	As required	Chief Executive's Office

## **MONITORING AND REVIEW**

- 4.1 The communications strategy should be continually monitored and evaluated on a regular basis and 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 we use, we must be open and flexible enough to change them in order to improve. Such experience will help us to better develop our communications in the future.
- 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.
- 4.4 The ultimate political measure of success in delivering Comhairle strategies and policies is the democratic process itself as part of the political election cycle.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

- 4.5 We monitor our progress in different ways, including:
  - analysing our coverage in newspapers, on radio and television. Local coverage is partially reported as a Key Performance Indicator. This should be extended. Media coverage can be measured in terms of advertising equivalent rates
  - considering feedback from the website, questionnaires, surveys on specific issues, key contacts and opinion formers
  - events debriefing
  - carrying out internal audits and service reviews
- 4.6 Assessing the effectiveness of the Communications Strategy could be done in a number of ways –
  - a Employee Survey – asking employees to participate in surveys and then assessing feedback and reacting accordingly;
  - b Feedback process – using electronic newsletter.
  - c Public Consultations Surveys – questioning the public to gauge whether they feel better informed;
  - d Staff Suggestions Scheme on Communications;

- e External Audit of Communications – employ consultants to undertake external audit.
- f Stakeholders Consultation – stakeholders, such as Community Planning Partners can be consulted to gauge effectiveness of communications strategy in relation to joint working/co-operation.

### **LOOKING TO THE FUTURE**

- 5.1 Communications is a fast changing environment and we need to be flexible enough to recognise and implement new technologies and developments where appropriate.
- 5.2 We are currently using **Twitter** and **Facebook** on a pilot basis. A separate report on a Social Media Policy will be presented to the Comhairle at the next series of meetings.
- 5.3 The Community Portal **E-Sgire** is due to be launched early in the New Year. This will provide a means of two way community online communication.