

Template Scoping Document

*As amended with O&S Member comments 09 10 15*

<p><b><u>Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee</u></b> <b><u>(Sitting as a Select Committee)</u></b></p>	
<p><b><u>Scrutiny Review Title:</u></b></p>	<p><b>Media &amp; Communications</b></p>
<p><b><u>Background issues</u></b> to review – rationale for scrutinising this issue:</p>	<p>Members raised the issue of reviewing Media &amp; Communications, which was agreed by the Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 16 March 2015 as the focus of its scrutiny review for 2015/16.</p> <p>It had been agreed in the proceeding municipal year to defer this item from 2014-15 to 2015-16 given the workload of the Committee at the time.</p> <p>Members wish to investigate this matter as they are of the view that Media &amp; Communications plays a vital role in the way the Council communicates with the public and its partners, so consideration of this matter by a scrutiny review would be beneficial to establish what are the current practices and to see if there are any areas that could be improved upon.</p>
<p>Is the issue highlighted as one of the Council’s corporate aims and objectives of the Council’s <b><u>Corporate Strategy</u></b>, – ‘Sharing the Dividends’? If so which one:</p> <p>Is the issue addressed by the Council’s <b><u>Community Strategy</u></b>?</p>	<p>There are no specific references to <b>media and communications</b> within the Council’s Corporate Strategy. However, within the ethos of being a co-operative Council and providing “value for money services” that “put residents first” there are broad commitments that as well as providing an internal service for Members and officers would also support the aspiration of providing a communications service that could benefit the local voluntary sector and other local good causes and events.</p> <p>The Council’s media and communications is not an issue that is directly addressed by the SoStevenage Community Strategy. However, good communications between the Council and its</p>

	<p>partners is a vital component to achieving its goals so consideration of the Council's media and communications should be welcomed by officers.</p> <p>There is a Corporate Communications Strategy which will be considered as part of the evidence for the review.</p>
<p>Is this issue one that raises interest with the public via <b>complaints</b> or Members' surgeries?:</p>	<p>There have been no recorded complaints regarding Media &amp; Communications.</p>
<p><b>Focus of the review:</b> (State what the review focus will be)</p>	<p>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting.</p> <p>Members have so far suggested the following possible Options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Corporate Culture – moving to a collaborative approach with residents, partners and the voluntary sector - Is SBC getting its culture and behaviours round to a positive community support role, not just a telling us what has been decided?</i></li> <li>• <i>Processes – Find out what the normal 'day job' is for the Council's Communications Team? Officers to describe the sort of work the Team undertakes and show examples and how work is signed off. How formalised are these processes and are they regularly adhered to?</i></li> <li>• <i>Is the service proactive or reactive i.e. does the service rely on Executive Members and Senior Officers to approach the Team or are there mechanisms in place to ensure that when they are communicating externally that a corporate standard is maintained?</i></li> <li>• <i>The review could also consider the relationship with the local media; Councils use of Social Media; the increase in the use of Freedom of Information requests; communicating in Plain English;</i></li> <li>• <i>Case Studies - Members to highlight cases of external communications that they are aware of where they consider improvement could be made or which demonstrated good practise: ((i) Recent flash flood on 17 July 2015 and how this issue &amp; response was communicated; (ii) Facebook/online petition re Cemetery; (iii) Stevenage Football Club parking at the showground; and (iv) Town Centre Regeneration)</i></li> </ul> <p>Other issues identified by Members at the scoping meeting: Cllr Sarah Mead <i>"this review is an opportunity to look at the way that letters are worded – communication by letter is one of the most common issues, particularly in the event of a missed payment of rent/council tax. Where letters cross</i></p>

	<i>from separate departments this leads to particular anxiety and there should be scope to acknowledge processes clearly.”</i>
<b>Timing issues:</b> Are there any timing constraints to when the review can be carried out?	None apparent prior to scoping, but the review will have to fit in with the timing of the other Select Committee review work programme items. Officers will advise at the meeting if there are any timing issues to consider.
The Committee will meet on (provide <b>dates</b> if known):	Dates: Day/Month/Time/Venue 22 September 2015 – Consider draft Scoping Document with Head of Business Strategy Community & Customer Services 19 October 2015 – Formally agree scope 16 November 2015 – Presentation of Service & interviews with officers & other witnesses including “critical friend” 16 December 2015 – Interview with Leader & Chief Executive 20 January 2016 - Draw together findings and draft recommendations 15 February 2016 – <b>Provisional date for the Final Report and Recommendations</b>
<b>SBC Leads</b> (list the Executive Portfolio Holders and SD’s Heads of Service who should appear as witnesses):	<i>Officers have suggested the following people:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Leader of the Council*– Cllr Sharon Taylor</i></li> <li>• <i>Chief Executive – Scott Crudgington</i></li> <li>• <i>Head of Business Strategy, Community and Customer Services – Richard Protheroe</i></li> <li>• <i>Communications Manager - Lucie Culkin</i></li> <li>• <i>Various “back office” departments to possibly include; the Customer Service Centre (how they handle social media service requests/complaints); Housing Allocations – Jaine Cresser</i></li> </ul> <p><i>*Executive Member with corporate responsibility for Media and Communications</i></p> <p><i>Any other officers or Members? – Members suggested a representative of the Local Media</i></p>
Any <b>other witnesses</b> (external persons/critical friend)?:	To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting. <i>Possible options identified by officers:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A peer from a neighbouring area to act as a “critical friend” – Richard Protheroe has advised that a contact at the LGA would be invited to attend.</i></li> </ul>



<p><b><u>Background Documents/data</u></b> that can be provided to the review</p>	<p><i>To be identified by the Committee at the scoping meeting 22 September 2015.</i></p> <p><i>Possible options suggested by officers:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Case study documents (when agreed)</i></li> <li>• <i>Evidence of normal practises – showing the process of refining a document prior to publication</i></li> <li>• <i>Communications Strategy</i></li> <li>• <i>Residents Survey data, when published Sep/Oct 2015</i></li> </ul>
<p><b><u>Agreed Milestones and review sign off</u></b> -To be agreed by Members and officers</p>	<p><i>Formal response from Executive Portfolio Holder (Executives have a Statutory requirement to respond to Scrutiny review recommendations two months after receiving a final report and recommendations of a review: <b>Date Executive Portfolio responses are expected</b> (dependent on the final report &amp; executive portfolio response template publishing date – <b>Possibly February 2016</b>):<b>April 2016</b></i></p> <p><b><i>Date for monitoring implementation of recommendations – final sign off (typically one year from completion of the review): February 2017</i></b> (Close to this date the O&amp;S Committee will receive a report at a Committee meeting to agree the final sign off of the review recommendations)</p>