

Report For:	<b>BUCKINGHAMSHIRE SHADOW EXECUTIVE</b>
Meeting Date:	<b>11 June 2019</b>

## SUMMARY

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY</b>
Responsible Officer:	Kate Walker, Programme Communications and Engagement Lead
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<b>Recommendation:</b>	<b>That members note and comment on the Communications and Engagement Strategy for the transition to the new council</b>
Legal & Finance:	As the detailed work to deliver these plans is implemented the legal and financial implications will be considered.
Options:	It is important to have in place a coordinated approach to communications with all key audiences, throughout the transition period to ensure consistent messages across the five councils and with key audiences, increasing awareness and understanding of the move to a new council by April 2020.
Reason: (Executive only)	N/A

### **Purpose of this report**

This report summarises the Communications and Engagement Strategy for the transition period to the new Buckinghamshire Council.

The Strategy recommends a coordinated approach to communications with all key audiences, led by the Programme Office, on behalf of the Shadow Authority throughout the transition period to ensure consistent messages across the five councils and with key audiences, increasing awareness and understanding of the move to a new council by April 2020.

### **Content of the report:**

#### Introduction

1. Good communication and engagement is fundamental to ensuring a smooth transition from the existing five district and county councils in Buckinghamshire, to one new council for all of Buckinghamshire that will start on 1 April 2020.

2. It is important that residents, staff, members, parish and town councils, strategic partners including the health sector other public bodies and emergency services, businesses and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) are kept informed of progress and regularly reassured that public service outcomes will not be negatively impacted by the creation of the new authority.
3. The overarching strategy (*Appendix 1*) outlines the overall approach to communications and engagement over the coming year and identifies the key stakeholders. Further detailed stakeholder plans have been identified and developed for the following audiences – staff, members, town and parish councils, residents, strategic partners and businesses. These plans will continue to be developed as the work of the programme boards

### Background

4. This strategy was initially developed by the Communications Workstream. On appointment of the Programme Office Communications and Engagement Leads this strategy will now be delivered and developed by the PMO Communications team, working closely with the Communications Workstream and the other workstreams across the programme.

### Summary

5. The overarching communications strategy identifies three phases of supporting communications and engagement plans:
  - Phase 1 – the period up to the making of the Structural Change Orders
  - Phase 2 (a) – from the calling of the first Shadow Authority meeting to end March 2020, including transition arrangements
  - Phase 2 (b) – promote the lead-in to the new council creation and then first 100 days in  
*(Detailed plans for phase 2 (b) will be developed further on into the programme to launch in January 2020)*
6. Detailed stakeholder plans have been identified for five main stakeholder groups; Internal Staff, Elected Members, Town and Parish Councils, Residents and Strategic Partners and Businesses.
7. The residents and strategic partner and businesses stakeholder plans are still in development to be able to reflect the information and requirements from the Communities Board and the Housing, Growth and Economy Board. These plans will include regular updates through a variety of existing channels for residents such as printed and e-magazines, keeping MPs, strategic members and businesses informed and developing face to face engagement opportunities for these audiences over the coming year; whilst making use of existing meetings and sessions for these audiences alongside dedicated and more specific events. They will also seek to identify areas of

consultation and engagement to support the development of the programme toward the new council. These plans will be developed over the next month.

8. The internal communications and engagement plan focuses on developing a series of joint roadshows, newsletters and a shared online area for staff across all five councils to ensure consistent messages and information to be shared across the five councils. This plan will be influenced by the work of the HR and OD workstream, and the Programme Communications and Engagement Leads will work closely with this group to ensure a coordinated approach to staff communications and engagement, enabling opportunities for staff to ask questions throughout the coming year.
9. There will be an internal communications survey carried out with staff at the end of July to gather feedback on initial communications and inform planning for the future.
10. The members communications and engagement plan focuses on developing a comprehensive member briefing programme, which will be carried out with the Legal and Governance workstream, alongside regular communication through newsletters, dedicated online information for members and equipping members with information and key messages to act as advocates with residents and other stakeholders. There will be a member reference group to support the development of engagement and member support as part of the Communications and Legal and Governance areas of work, which will be used to help inform ongoing member communication and engagement activity.
11. The town and parish council engagement plan will be closely aligned to support the development and work of the Localism workstream. This plan therefore outlines opportunities for engagement events, as well as more regular communications through a monthly newsletter and dedicated online area information and updates as the programme develops over the coming year.
12. The stakeholder plans will be live working documents, as our communications and engagement work must be able to respond where necessary to emerging requirements from the Programme Boards and issues affecting the progress of the programme to set up the new Buckinghamshire Council and feedback from stakeholders, staff, members and residents.
13. The Strategy also details the Communications and Media protocol previously shared with the members of the Shadow Executive which will be reviewed in the next few weeks.

### **Resourcing requirements**

14. The delivery of this programme will be resourced by the Programme Communications Team, working closely with the Communications Workstream and teams across the five councils, and the relevant workstreams across the programme.
15. There will be a budget required to support the delivery of this work; estimated costings to follow.

### **Corporate Implications**

16. The communications and engagement strategy has been produced to support the work of the programme to deliver the new Buckinghamshire Council. The nature of our communications will mean we need to be able to deliver planned communications and



also react quickly to immediate communication priorities, the strategy and plans therefore need to be flexible enough to allow for changes and urgent requests.

### **Next Steps**

17. The implementation of this strategy is in motion with the Programme Communications Team working with the relevant workstreams, following the approval of the Structural Changes Order, and will continue to be developed over the coming weeks and months as the programme to delivering the new Buckinghamshire Council progresses.

