Leaders

for the Heart of the South West

APPENDIX

Leaders for the Heart of the South West & HotSW Joint Committee

Communications Strategy

Last update: 14 May, 2018
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1. Introduction

This document sets out a Communications Strategy to support the work of the Leaders for the Heart of the South West (HotSW).

These are the representatives from 23 organisations across Devon and Somerset - including all district councils, two National Parks and three Clinical Commissioning Groups – exploring opportunities to work together to improve productivity and prosperity

1.1 Scope

Since coming together in mid-2015 for Devolution discussions, the Leaders' purpose has evolved to reflect the changing Government agenda. Their work is no longer simply about securing a 'Devolution deal'. Instead, it is focussed on improving productivity and addressing other key-regional issues, seeking additional decision-making and funding flexibilities in a more piece-meal way.

Working together, notably through the HotSW Joint Committee, the Leaders' also provide a means by which the area can have a strong, coherent voice with which to speak to Government and neighbouring areas and partners.

The Joint Committee is key to the Leaders' work, but their remit and interests are wider - for example, the establishment of a Sub-national Transport Board which would sit outside of the Joint Committee structure.

Therefore, although a substantial proportion of communications work covered in this strategy will be in support of the Joint Committee, the strategy should also be considered the framework for communications around wider work and interest of the Leaders'.

A commitment to raising the profile of the HotSW Leaders and Joint Committee in Westminster (see section 5) should be seen as central to the success of this strategy, building on the traction that the Leaders have already achieved. Communications can support this work but it will also require considerable work beyond communications.

This document will be reviewed regularly to assess progress and plan ahead. This will be led by Somerset County Council (SCC) and Devon County Council (DCC) communications leads, but delivery will be owned by all partner organisations.

The Campaign Action Plan (Section 7 and Appendix A) will be a live document managed by SCC Communications with support from DCC and the Programme Management Office (PMO).

1.2 Governance

As the administrating authority, SCC will 'own' this strategy, but it has been drafted jointly with DCC Communications and the Joint Committee's PMO.

This strategy was agreed in principle by the Chief Executive's Delivery Board on 20 April, 2018. The Action Plan will be reviewed at least monthly at PMO meetings.

Communications Teams for all 23 organisations are expected to work to previously agreed Communications Protocols which are currently being updated (Appendix D).

2. Objectives

This strategy aims to supports the work of the Leaders for HotSW and the Joint Committee by meeting the following objectives:

- **Build support for the work of the HotSW Leaders in Westminster and Government departments.**
  Progress has already been made to raise the profile of HotSW within Government, notably with key civil servants within BEIS. This needs to be built on, explaining the great potential of the area and the various opportunities it presents - in doing so increasing the likelihood of Government support for HotSW asks.
  This work needs to start by understanding the current level of support as a baseline that progress can be measured against, with a clear view of what success would look like.
  Much of this objective would be achieved through Public Affairs activity rather than communications, though communications would support the PA work.

- **Articulate clearly and concisely the HotSW Leaders' of 'asks' from central Government.**
  To help create a wider understanding of what the HotSW Leaders and the Joint Committee are working to achieve.

- **Provide regular information and updates to key influencers across the HotSW.**
  The being better informed they are about the work of the group and committee, the more likely they are to support it and influence others to do so.

- **Raise public awareness and understanding of the work of the Leaders and the Joint Committee.**
  As transparent and publically-funded bodies, the partnership wishes to keep residents informed of its work and highlight the tangible benefits it will bring.

- **Update elected members on progress, key decisions and milestones.**
  The decision to join the Joint Committee was endorsed by each of the democratically elected organisations within the partnership. Their continued support is important and they need to be updated on progress.

3. Target Audiences

Appendix B - a stakeholder map – is under development. This will be completed to set out the various individuals and groups with an interest in this work and/or the ability to influence its success.

All stakeholders are important, but those with the most interest and influence will be prioritised in communications.

From these stakeholders, 'Key Influencers' (Appendix C – under development) will be identified as being critical to success. These will receive particular attention, with each assigned an 'owner' from the CEO/Leaders board who will lead on communications with them.

Below are Key Audiences for communications.

Key Audience 1: <u>Joint Committee Leaders and CEOs</u>
Need to be kept up to date with all significant progress. Much of this will come through the various meetings and PMO function, but there will also be developments between meetings.

Key Audience 2: <u>Key Influencers</u>
Individuals in positions of influence and/or leadership from various backgrounds and fields of expertise across the HotSW area.

Key Audience 3: <u>Elected members & key staff within HotSW partner organisations.</u>
All elected members within democratically elected organisations, whose continued support is needed. Organisations within the partnership which do not have elected members are will be expected to identify their own key staff who need to be kept up to date on progress.

Key Audience 4: <u>Residents across Devon and Somerset</u>
As organisations in the partnership are publically-funded bodies, residents should be updated on the work, through the media but also directly through online information, social media and, potentially, events and meetings.

4. Key Messages

Key messages aim to capture the most important information to be communicated so that it can be delivered with clarity and consistency.
They are not meant to be used verbatim, but relevant messages should be reflected in all communications. They will be updated as the campaign develops.

4.1 Primary messages
- We're committed to increasing prosperity and productivity for everyone.
- We're already delivering productivity and growth, but there are big opportunities to do even more.
- Our work will bring real benefits – better wages, jobs, stronger business and public services.
- Partnership is powerful – it has given us a unified voice and we are already having constructive discussions with Government.

4.2 Secondary messages
- The Productivity Plan is key and focusses on the big issues of housing, skills and employment, infrastructure, connectivity and business leadership.
- We're diverse but have common ambitions and priorities.
- The Government is impressed by our leadership, cohesion and ambition.
- The HotSW area has huge potential and we're ambitious about its future.
- At almost £35bn per annum, the Devon and Somerset economy is worth more than Birmingham and Merseyside.
- Improving productivity is one of the biggest economic challenges facing the country and the South West in particular.
- The Joint Committee is central to what the Leaders Group's work, but the group's interests and remit are wider.

4.3 Messages for specific areas of interest

In addition to the Primary and Secondary key messages, there are also key points to be made around priority areas of work:

- **Rural/coastal productivity:** The importance of rural productivity must be understood. Rural productivity has an impact on urban productivity, and vice versa. Exeter demonstrates the connection between rural and urban success.

- **Transport:** We are developing a Sub-National Transport Body to address the issues of capacity and resilience on our transport network.

- **Digital:** We have to keep pace with new digital technologies to meet our ambitions to be a high-tech area for business development.

- **Housing and strategic planning:** Affordability and supply need to be addressed and we are looking to work with the National Infrastructure Commission to explore links to infrastructure, housing and business development.

- **Ideas**: We are working with Innovate UK to explore our ideas for innovation in areas including data analytics, nuclear, agri-food and tourism.

- **Skills:** We will work with Government to deliver national policies in our area around skills, employment and learning, and develop programmes to help tackle social mobility and inclusive growth.

5. Approach and tactics

5.1. Concerted engagement work with MPs and, where appropriate, Ministers and other key figures in Westminster and Government departments.

The success of many aspects of the HotSW Leaders' and Joint Committee's work relies on support from Government. Significant progress has already been made within BEIS, but this needs to be expanded on and developed. The HotSW asks and ambitions are not widely known or understood and to raise their profile will require considerable work to identify key individuals and groups, committees and opportunities to influence and inform.

The communications strategy can support and play a role in this, but such work will require a commitment of time and resources beyond communications.

Consideration should be given to how this work can be resourced and organised and how communications can support this.

5.2. A concise but compelling narrative

A clear, concise and credible articulation of the HotSW Leaders' 'asks' should be a cornerstone for all communications. It should focus on tangible outcomes and make use of case studies where possible, capturing the ambitions and potential of the region, as well as what is required from Westminster to take them forward.

5.3. Framework/Partner responsibilities

This strategy provides a framework for communications, led by SCC and DCC communications.

SCC and DCC cannot, however, be responsible for all delivery. There is an expectation that individual organisations will take ownership for sharing information within their organisations and responding to local issues.

5.4. Single point of information
With 23 different organisations involved, a single point of information is needed. This is currently is being hosted on the SCC website (http://democracy.somerset.gov.uk/mgCommitteeDetails.aspx?ID=357)
A simple Wordpress site will be developed to host information about the Joint Committee and relevant documents around meetings and decisions.
All the partner organisations will sign-post to this information from their own websites.

5.5. Regular updates/briefings
Regular concise and Plain English updates summarising the progress of the Group and Committee work will be prepared and circulated.
These will focus on key decisions, milestones and case studies where possible. Responsibility for providing appropriate information lies with the individual workstreams and the PMO, with SCC Communications to edit and format as appropriate.

These will be circulated to partner Chief Executives, Leaders and Communications Leads for sharing within individual organisations, as well as with key influencers and other audiences deemed appropriate.

Details of timing format are to be confirmed.

5.6. Face-to-face meetings with key influencers
Including MPs, other key influencers (Appendix C) and BEIS officials. These will be the responsibility of Leaders, Chief Executives and members of the PMO as set out in Appendix C. SCC and DCC communications will provide support where needed.
For example, Westminster briefings for MPs from across the Devon & Somerset at key stages.

5.7. Publicity and Media Relations
The work of the Leaders' Group and Joint Committee will be publicised as appropriate.

This will be led by the SCC Communications Team, working closely with DCC communications and the PMO - but with an expectation that individual organisations will take ownership reinforce this with their own media work where appropriate.

A Communications Protocol (Appendix D) sets out how Communications Teams from all partnership organisations will work together on media relations. This has been in place for some time but will be refreshed and recirculated with this strategy when it has been agreed.

- Proactive communications
Formal PR and statements about the work of the Leaders and Committee as a whole will come from the SCC Communications Team, in liaison with the Chair of the Joint Committee, DCC and other relevant partners.

- Reactive communications

Responses to enquiries and requests for interview about the work of the Leaders and the Joint Committee as a whole will be handled by the SCC communications team, liaising with DCC colleagues where possible.

Enquiries of this kind received by other organisations will be passed on to the SCC Communications Team.

However, individual councils and councillors are of course free to comment on and respond to questions regarding their involvement and work with the partnership.

5.8. Case studies

Explaining the tangible benefits of this work to the residents of the HotSW area is a priority.

Wherever possible, case studies that bring this to life should be identified by workstreams, highlighted to the SCC and DCC communications leads and used in communications as appropriate.

5.9. Channels

All relevant channels will be used, notably:

- Online content
- PR and media relations
- Face-to-face briefings
- Social media – At this stage there would be not benefit from creating a new social media presence for the Leaders and/or Joint Committee, though this will be kept under review.
  However, the hashtag #HotSWLeaders can be used by all the partner organisations to help bring together comment and debate of their work and progress.

6. Campaign Action plan

All communications actions will be planned in advance where possible and captured on the Action Plan (Appendix A).

This spreadsheet records activity, timing, responsibility and sign-off.

This will be updated and maintained by Mark Ford (SCC) and Paula Miles (DCC), with input from the PMO.

7. Branding

A Leaders of the Heart of the South West brand has already been established and has the support of the Leaders for HotSW. This will be reflected in online content, publicity and any other materials produced.

This will be the overall branding for all communications about the Leaders' work and the Joint Committee, with the individual organisation involved name referenced in materials as appropriate.

8. Budget

There is no allocated budget for communications. However, the Joint Committee has funding attached and any costs associated would come from that budget,

This budget will be used to cover the costs of all Communications, including production of materials, web presence, advertising and commissioned photographs.

9. Evaluation

The following measures will be used to check our progress and highlight potential areas for improvement.

Objective	Action	Measure/target
Build support for the work of the HotSW Leaders in Westminster and Government departments.	TBC – in support of Public Affairs activity	TBC
Articulate clearly and concisely the HotSW Leaders' of 'asks' from central Government.	Produce a HotSW 'asks/opportunities' document.	Signed-off by CEx by end September.
Provide regular information and updates to key influencers across the HotSW	Create and distribute briefings	Minimum of one per quarter.
Raise public awareness and understanding of the work of the Leaders and the Joint Committee.	- Publicity and PR - Online presence - Social media	- Web hits per month - Social media engagement - Media coverage
Ensure elected members are kept up to date with work, key decisions and milestones	Create and distribute briefings	Minimum of briefing after each JC meeting.